

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, in 1960 to be specific, a religious persecution broke out in the territory of the Sudan in Africa. A Christian, black student named Paride Taban fled the danger and went to Uganda. While there, he studied for the priesthood and was ordained.

When things settled down in Sudan, young Fr. Taban returned to his homeland. He was assigned to a parish in Palotaka. **BUT** his congregation found it hard to believe that he was really a priest. Fr. Taban says:

“The people looked hard at me and asked, ‘Do you mean to say, black man, that you are a priest? We can’t believe it.’”

These people had never had a black priest before. They had always had white priests, who gave them clothing & medicine. Young Fr. Taban was from the Madi tribe and had nothing to give them. He was poor like them. To make matters worse, Fr. Taban had to introduce them to the changes of the Second Vatican Council. These changes bothered the people greatly. They said to one another:

“This young black priest turns our altar around and celebrates Mass in our own language. He cannot be a real priest.” Only after a great deal of difficulty did the people of Palotaka finally accept Fr. Taban.

The story of Fr. Taban is a modern example of the kind of rejection Jesus encountered when he returned to his homeland of Nazareth. The people said to one another:

“Isn’t the carpenter, the son of Mary? Isn’t he an ordinary worker, like ourselves? How can he know any more about God than we? Who does he think he is?”

The people of Nazareth were not the only ones who wondered how a carpenter could know about God. Some modern Christians still find it hard to accept the fact that the man we call ‘Lord & God’ was schooled in a carpenter shop and not in a university lecture hall.

How does any of this apply to our lives, you ask.

Well... I’m glad you asked that question!

Jesus answered that question himself when he said:

“No pupil is greater than his teacher; no slave is greater than his master.” *Mt. 10:24*

In other words, if people rejected Jesus in his lifetime,

we shouldn’t be surprised if people reject us because we oppose the destroying of human life through abortion.

We shouldn’t be surprised if people reject us because we speak out in defense of human rights in places like Syria, Iran, Russia, China, Africa, South America, or Cuba.

We shouldn’t be surprised if people reject us if we speak out against the Supreme Court for rewriting the definition of marriage.

And finally, we shouldn’t even be surprised if, sometimes, our own families reject us. Jesus said this would happen. *Lk. 12:53*

For example, a parent refuses to forgive a child from the heart/or a child refuses to forgive a father or mother from the heart. NOW...

Now, when rejection like this occurs:
it's easy for the rejected one to lose heart.

It's easy to give up.

It's easy to stop loving.

It's easy to grow angry.

*It's easy to become bitter and resentful. **BUT**, we **MUST** resist such temptation!*

Once upon a time, *centuries ago—when I was a kid and movie theaters showed cartoons, there was a popular series called Looney Tunes. A favorite character in the series was a romantic skunk called Pepe LePew. Pepe was always falling in love with someone. BUT... because of his unpleasant odor, Pepe's love was always rejected. BUT...that... didn't... stop... Pepe!*

He went right on loving—no matter how many times he was rejected. Pepe never gave up on people or love. That's why so many moviegoers grew to love Pepe.

You know, in a way, Pepe was a lot like Jesus. Jesus never gave up on people, either. He went right on loving them—no matter how many times he was rejected... even to his nailing on the cross!

And, perhaps, that's the biggest practical lesson we can take away from today's readings.

We can imitate Jesus,

We can imitate Fr. Taban.

We can imitate Pepe LePew.

We can go on loving people no matter how many times we are rejected.

This does NOT suggest that we allow anyone to abuse us, though. That's a whole other can of worms.

To sum-up... today's readings can teach us two things:

1st, *people will, inevitably, reject us at times, just as they rejected Jesus.*

2nd, *we should not let this keep us from continuing to love, just as Jesus never let it keep him from loving.*

I close with these words from his great Sermon on the Mount:

***“Happy are you who weep now; you WILL laugh.
Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and say
that you are evil... all because of the Son of Man!
Be glad when that happens and dance for joy,
because... a great reward is kept for you in heaven.”***Lk. 6:21-23

*May almighty God, our Abba, bless you...
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen*